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THE THRESHOLD

BY MARY LINDA BRADLEY

I see him on the lake, in his red skiff,
A boy I know, perched on the very stern,
His whistle lilting o'er the engine's beat.
And the small boat, prow lifted, scuds along
Like a wild duck, half-trailing through the waves.
Brown as an Autumn leaf, this lad, and strong
As any sapling, toughened by the winds!
Student of strength, dexterity and speed . . .
Whether in baseball contest, where his arm,
Supple as seasoned yew, lets fly the ball;
Whether he yields him to investiture
By the deep lake, smooth as extended silk,
Cleaving its stuff with ever-healing strokes;
Or whether, when that silk turns hard as glass,
His ice-boat soars away athwart the wind—
He questions not the source of such well-being,
Nor marks the faultless engine of his heart,
The wayward battery of eager brain,
Accepting the Creator's heaven and earth
As common facts and not as miracles.
Little he asks from fourteen years—the gifts
Of food and sleep, of strength and kindly love.

O gallant servant of the Sun and Wind,
And lover of the changing, lovely Lake,
Lavish your clean, glad service in their praise.
A little space, and then the head will ask
Why beats the heart? And whence aloft that fleet,
Whose mast-lights rove the distant lakes of night?
And thought will rouse you from your long content,
And build you a new heaven and an earth

—Not a mere background of well-ordered dust,
But a huge bulk of contest, where men's vows
—Those early, god-like vows—thrust like scarred swords
To leave a lingering mark, or fall to rust.

What would you do, O Valiant Unafraid?
Your hand maintains you and your foot is sure.
Here is the world, here at your gate and there
By many million gates of distant men.
The colored segments of the map are real
And you may tread their substance, seek their worth.
Ah! take your place and build it mightily,
Till men shall seek its comfort, know its power.
The door unto the Years is opening wide,
Thence Evil leads to waste and age-of-soul,
While Good must find utility and life—
Pass through, O youth, lift up your heart and choose.

MARY LINDA BRADLEY.